GUIDE TO THE OJ23 OROKAIVA II FILE

[The Orokaiva were chosen as the representative for Cluster Area 36 (Papuans) in the Probability Sample Files B program. They consist of a number of closely related tribes speaking mutually intelligible dialects and showing a high degree of cultural uniformity. These tribes reside in the Northern District of Papua (now Papua New Guinea), and are concentrated in the Popondetta Sub-District in an area reaching from the coast at Buna Island to the northern slopes of Mount Lamington and the regions to the north of this general line.

Although the Orokaiva tribes did not have an inclusive name for themselves until "Orokaiva" was intoduced by the Europeans, they generally drew distinctions among themselves between the river people, salt water people, and inland people (umo-ke, eva'embo, and periho, respectively). There are widespread traditional beliefs dealing with the common origins not only of these different categories of people, but also of mutually hostile tribes, the largest political units among them, and of the various dialectal groupings and local cultural variants, which correspond to a limitied extent with the political division into tribes (7: Rimoldi, p. 3).

The precise boundaries of what may properly be called the Orokaiva tribal area are best determined by the criterion the Papuans themselves use, namely language. Orokaiva is part of the Binandere group of eight languages spoken in most of the more densely populated parts of the Northern District; of these, Orokaiva is spoken by the greatest number of people, but only by about half of the population in the Orokaiva-Binandere area. Dialect divisions within the Orokaiva language area are minor; the boundaries of the area coincide with those of the region administered by the Higaturu Local Government Council which covers the Saiho and most of the Sohe-Popondetta census divisions. While there are considerable vocabulary differences between the Binandere languages, there is a close resemblance in grammar and enough similarity in vocabulary to make a limited degree of intercommunication possible. Binandere is a family of the South-East New Guinea phylum of the Central New Guinea macro-phylum. Wider affiliations are not presently determinable (Voegelin and Voegelin 1977: 249-255).

The indigenous population of the Popondetta Sub-District totals some 36,500 people of whom 26,500 are Orokaiva and occupy the central lowland area. There are, in addition, an estimated 1,000 indigenes from other parts of Papua New Guinea, either employed by the administration of European planters (as contract labor) or operating smallholdings under a land settlement scheme.

The European population consists of about 500 persons, most of whom live in the district headquarters of Popondetta (pop. 600) and, like the the indigenes from other districts, live apart from the Orokaiva settlements (8: Waddell, pp. 7-9).

The area the Orokaiva occupy is a humid tropical lowland, and uniformly high temperatures and rainfall provide a year-long growing season. The seasons, usually referred to as "wet" and "dry", are definable in terms of wind direction, rainfall, and humidity. The wet season, from December to March, is characterized by northeasterly or northwesterly winds, high temperatures and humidity, and late afternoon thunderstorms, while the dry season, from May to October, experiences northeasterly winds, lower temperatures, less cloud cover and more irregular rainfall. Although seasonal variations in rainfall are slight, they have a considerable bearing on the rhythm of Orokaiva economic life (8: Waddell, p. 5).

The Orokaiva have a subsistence economy where the bulk of goods produced are consumed by the household of the producer. Swidden agriculture is the subsistence base. The main horticultural product is taro which occupies about nine-tenths of the cultivated area, but a variety of other plants is found: banana, sugar cane, edible pitpit, German taro, and a few introduced vegetables such as pineapples, tomatoes, beans, and some sweet potato. Although the

Orokaiva traditionally planted coconut, betelnut and a few other trees in gardens, villages, and in the bush, their arboriculture used to be rudimentary in comparison to their precise and detailed attention to tubers, especially taro. Under Australian pressure during the colonial period, rubber, coffee and copra trees have been planted, providing the Orokaiva with a reliable and substantial cash income in recent years (5: Schwimmer, pp. 18-20).

A good deal of plant and animal food is obtained by foraging, especially in the tropical rainforest which covers most of the Northern District. Foraged animal foods include grubs, frogs, snails, rats, bush eggs and lice. Foraged plant foods are valued during the dry season, when roots, leaves and fern fronds may make up part of a meal. Fish are an important resource, the product being used not only for consumption but also for trade. Hunting is less important; the usual quarry consists of small marsupials, birds, and pigs. There are three kinds of domestic livestock: pigs, dogs, and fowls. Each man has one or more small dogs he uses for hunting but which are ultimately destined for the pot. Fowls are a useful source of meat, eggs, and feathers for decoration on headdresses, spears, etc. Domestic pigs are slowly disappearing from the villages, in response to a government campaign to eliminate pig husbandry in an attempt to improve village hygiene (5: Schwimmer, p. 20).

An everyday Orokaiva meal consists of taro, often with a few vegetable condiments. In the dry season, any of a number of subsidiary foods (sweet potato, German taro, yam, banana, breadfruit and several others) may be added to make the taro stretch further. Meat or fish is eaten only rarely, usually on festive occasions. Foods like tea, sugar, bread and salt are also reserved for such occasions. The main drink with meals is a soup consisting of the water in which the vegetables and herbs were cooked (5: Schwimmer, p. 18).

The basic economic unit is the household, most frequently occupied in the garden. Sometimes close relatives work together on larger tasks, helping each other in turn. Cooperation between men is common during hunting and house-building; cooperation of a total village is rare, but there are cooperative hunting and fishing expeditions. There is also a sharp sexual division of labor (5: Schimmer, p. 27).

Small villages are the characteristic unit of settlement, with houses dispersed in a more or less rectangular form around a central earth or grass "square". Villages are in flat clearings where the grass is kept scrupulously cut and from which the women regularly sweep away rubbish. Houses are built by the men, each house normally being occupied by one nuclear family. Bachelors' houses, of the same size and construction as ordinary houses, are also built (5: Schwimmer, p. 23). Village size varies in relation to overall population

density, but nowhere exceeds 720 persons, the mean being 144 persons. The social organization and economy of the Orokaiva contribute to considerable instability in settlements, both in composition and size (8: Waddell, p. 9).

A village normally contains more than one clan branch and consequently is not necessarily a landholding unit. Its members may have closer ties of kinship with residents of other villages than with some of their co-residents; nevertheless, common residence implies some community of interest and a degree of group solidarity that is reinforced by government policy which recognizes villages rather than descent groups as functional entities. Marriages between members of different clan branches within the village also reinforce this solidarity, which is expressed in such ways as daily food gifts, cooperation in certain tasks, and joint ceremonial activities (8: Waddell, p. 9-10).

Every Orokaiva is recruited by birth into the clan of his or her father. All members of a clan claim, but cannot necessarily trace, common descent from a usually eponymous ancestor. Each clan is subdivided into named sub-groups or lineages which trace their origin to a named ancestor. A lineage comprises, on the average, three households. Usually several clans are represented in a single village, members of a single clan (clan branches) being scattered among a number of neighboring villages. Lineages are more localized in character, frequently being confined to a single village and tending to occupy one section of it (8: Waddell, p. 10; 7: Rimoldi, p. 29).

Post-marital residence is ideally patrivirilocal, but in practice people have a wide choice between the village of patrilateral or matrilateral kin or of affines, and residence may be changed at any time. The distribution of clan branches through a number of villages is closely tied to access to the group's land, hence the initial motivation for a long-term change in residence may be influenced by proximity to a new area of land intended to be brought into cultivation (7: Rimoldi, pp. 29ff.).

The Orokaiva social system is characterized by flexibility in arrangements for group membership and for transmission of rights to land. Inheritance is usually patrilineal, and various land rights may be distributed at a number of levels of social organization -- the clan branch, lineage, and individual -- the relative significance of each varying with the locality and population density. Further, more than a single descent group may have rights in a single piece of land. In many instances the clan branch functions essentially as a reference group, all land being associated with it. However, it may function as a primary right-holding group for those hunting areas distinct from current garden land, typically the grasslands. Primary rights to garden land are normally vested in the lineage; nevertheless, all such land is ultimately identifiable with individuals who may distribute land (and property) prior to their death not only to their immediate family but also to more distant kin.

Traditional tree crops are not planted in stands or groups like cash crop trees, but are widely scattered and may equally well be planted on patrimonial land or on the land of affines or matrilateral kin. Inheritance or rights to trees usually does not involve rights to the land on which they stand. However, owing to their wide spacing, their presence rarely affects other cultivation of the land (8: Waddell, pp. 10-12).

Orokaiva social organization incorporates no central authority or hereditary leadership. Instead, it is characterized by 'big men' (embo dambo) and an ascendancy of elders who have proved themselves equal to the task. Such men command the respect of the village -- based upon observed qualities of generosity, diligence, wealth, ability to make wise decisions and skill in arranging ceremonial activities -- but the status confers no sanctions (8: Waddell, p. 10).

The tribe is the largest unit which has a common territory. This is usually isolated from neighboring tribal territories by a belt of uninhabited country, and its occupants may speak of it as 'one ground', pusu taharo. There are customary restrictions upon feuding within the tribe; this political unit is the largest with its own intragroup morality, in sharp contrast to the standard forms of hostility between tribes. Aggression against members of another tribe took the form of organized, often cannibalistic raids prior to

European contact. Intertribal trade, though small in volume, was politically important in providing a motive for terminating warlike disputes. Intertribal trade was mainly in animal products, betelnut ingredients, feathers, and certain artifacts known to be of high quality in particular districts (5: Schwimmer, p. 31). The tribes, about twelve in number, are very loose units politically and recognize no single leader.

The traditional faith of the Orokaiva, though in many respects vague and locally variable, concerned itself primarily with the "spirits of the dead" and their influence on the welfare of the living. Death was appraised with particular realism, although it was considered ultimately as the result of supernatural causes. Magic had a consistent place. The Orokaiva, however, have been swept in recent times by a series of new cults, indicative of their religious adaptability in the face of fresh experience (23: Keesing, p. 19).

Mission influence is strong in the Northern District. This is provided almost exclusively by the Anglican Church and is of a fairly orthodox nature. Mission influence has not managed to totally eradicate traditional beliefs and there is an air of mysticism about the resultant religious system. Education is predominantly through a system of mission schools, partly financed by the Government Department of Education. The schools are staffed by both European and Orokaiva teachers and use an approved syllabus. The teachers are dedicated

but often not substantially better educated than their pupils (9: Kearney, pp. 5-6).

The Orokaiva mission experience is but one aspect of a long history of European colonization. In 1888, in response to Australian pressure, the British government annexed Papua. Gold was discovered shortly thereafter, and this led to a major movement of prospectors and miners to the Northern District. Relationships with the Papuans were bad from the start, and there were numerous killings on both sides. The Protectorate of British New Guinea became Australian territory by the passing of the Papua Act in 1905 by the Commonwealth Government of Australia. The new administration adapted a policy of peaceful penetration, and many measures of social and economic national development were introduced. Local control was in the hands of 'village constables', paid servants of the Crown; they were intermediaries between the government and the people, chosen by European officers. In 1951, an eruption occurred on Mount Lamington, completely devasting a large part of the area occupied by the Orokaiva. Survivors were provided with food, medicine, and other comforts by the government and were maintained in evacuation camps. Some officials saw in this sequence of events a chance to create Papuan model communities with up-to-date socioeconomic institutions, but large scale, expertly planned social, economic, and political development did not start in

Papua until around 1960, with the introduction of cash crops, agricultural extension work, land title improvement, road improvement, and educational development (5: Schwimmer, pp. 33ff.). Papua New Guinea became an independent nation on 16 September 1975.

This file is an update and continuation of the Orokaiva I file, which was processed in 1960-1961. It includes a substantial amount of new information on the Orokaiva, and contains 23 sources, numbers 5 through 27.

Among the notable additions to the file are sources 8: Waddell and 14: Crocombe, which together provide a comprehensive overview of the Orokaiva economy. Also included are a number of recent works by Erik Schwimmer, who has written on Orokaiva exchange cycles and trade relationships (sources 5 and 19), theories of paternity (source 20), personal relationships (source 25), mythology (source 26), and concepts of work (source 27).

The remaining sources in this file deal with narrower topics, and reflect the recent and widespread interest in Orokaiva social and economic development and acculturation. 10: Dakeyne examines the genesis and development of cash crop production among the Yega Orokaiva; 11: Dakeyne describes the rise of cooperative agricultral production among the Yega; 6: Crocombe and 15: Crocombe are concerned with the introduction of European-owned plantations in Papua and their effect on Orokaiva work organization and production; and 17: Morawetz

describes the ramifications of the land reform scheme initiated by the Australians on Orokaiva land use and settlement patterns. 18: Dakeyne is a study of Orokaiva acculturation, focusing on the Yega; also of interest in this vein is 12: Crocombe, which details changes in Orokaiva feasting due to acculturation, and 13: Hogbin, which describes a bridewealth exchange which took place in Inonda village in 1962. Sources 7: Rimoldi, 21: Belshaw, 22: Schwimmer, 23: Keesing, and 24: Schwimmer all describe the Mount Lamington eruption and its effect upon the Orokaiva and their social organization and beliefs. 16: Oostermeyer is a study of twelve Orokaiva entrepreneurs engaged in retail trading, and 9: Kearney reports the results of the administration of a purportedly culture-neutral test of cognitive ability to seven groups of adult male Orokaiva.

The Orokaiva I and Orokaiva II files should be used together. They contain a substantial amount of general ethnographic information on the Orokaiva, and together should prove to be useful for purposes of cross-cultural research, although coverage of religion and political organization is spotty. No special marking decisions were made for the Orokaiva II file.]

Reference:

Voegelin, C. F. and F. M. Voegelin. Classification and index of the world's languages. New York, Elsevier, 1977.

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